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SONOMA COUNTY

HORSE JOURNAL

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Sonoma County Horse Journal
Six-Time American Horse Publications National Award Winner

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ABBY HANC is the founder of PilatesEQ app and biomechanics studio in Petaluma. As a Pilates teacher and myofascial release practitioner, she works with human and equine clients and offers a unique dual perspective on the rider-horse partnership. Her approach addresses the interconnected nature of rider asymmetries and how postural habits directly influence equine biomechanics, creating a holistic method for improving the horse-rider connection. When not teaching or treating clients, she can be found enjoying time with her two horses and dog, Juniper. www.abbyhanc.com



DANELLE K. JACOBS, ESQ. is a realtor and attorney. She has lived in West County with her family and herd of quirky rescues for over twenty-five years. She is a lifelong hunter-jumper rider and horse owner with an equine science and English degree from Colorado State University. Besides spending time with her family and herd, Danelle enjoys reading, traveling, meeting new people, and helping them with their real estate needs. She can be reached at danelle.jacobs@cbrealty.com, www.storistables.com or 707-583-1422.



ON THE COVER
ILLUSTRATION BY KARI ONTKO
Inspired by the article 'The Horse as a Canvas', *Horse Journal* designer Kari Ontko illustrated the magazine's cover with the shape of the horse and its many colors and patterns from horses of the world.



CARY E. GLOECKNER is the owner of Firescape Wildfire Mitigation Services and has resided in Sonoma County for 52 years. In 1990, he joined the Gold Ridge Fire District as a volunteer firefighter, ending that service as a fire captain. In 1992, he was hired as a full-time paid firefighter with the Southern Marin Fire District and promoted to fire captain, vegetation management specialist. He retired after 27 years of service. In 2000, Cary opened Firescape Wildfire Mitigation Services, where he specializes in assessing properties for wildfire hazards, creating defensible space plans for property owners, developing fuel mitigation plans, and offering mechanical high weed mowing and brush mastication services. Cary and his wife Summer own two off-the-track Thoroughbreds named Lucky and Sky as well as two rescue mini horses named Piti and Phoenix. www.firescape.us, wildfireconsultant@gmail.com



CINDY BROWN has been endurance riding since 1995 and has accumulated 13,785 competition miles on multiple horses. She lives in Healdsburg with her husband, Jim Brown, on a 15-acre ranch with their seven Arabian horses, of which five are still in competition with her and her husband, both actively competing them.



MICHELLE BEKO, DVM has been an equine veterinarian since 1991. She enjoys spending time with her husband and daughter as well as doing dressage and jumping with her horse Ranger. You can reach her at Empire Equine at 707- 545-3909, empire-equine.com

DO YOU WANT TO WRITE FOR THE *HORSE JOURNAL*? OR SEE YOUR PHOTOS IN PRINT?
Contact Patti Schofler at schc.pschofler@gmail.com

President's Message



JOHN O'HARA PHOTOGRAPHY

Spring is Here!

The signs of spring are everywhere. Splashes of golden daffodils and sprays of lemon-yellow acacia line our country roads, electric-green grass replaces the forlorn brown of last year's hay fields, and longer and warmer days encourage growth in all corners of our county.

In the horse world, reliable harbingers of spring are decidedly less glamorous: clouds of shedded horsehair and, thankfully, drier turnouts. Collectively, we start to wonder if it's still too early to wash blankets? Are we current on all vaccines? What is the sugar content of that grass? Teeth? Worming? Soon it's time to put the rainy days behind us and use the energy of the season to get ready for the shows, the trails, and everything else we love to do with our equine partners.

The Sonoma County Horse Council (SCHC) is likewise energized this spring with our core mission to support horse devotees' strong sense of community. We're encouraging kids to follow their passion by sponsoring buckles for youth horse shows. We are launching our new "Trainer's Corner" series with the April 13 meet-and-greet generously hosted by the Saldana Training Center. And we are participating in the Opening Night Spectacular at the Sonoma County Fair this summer.

The SCHC is in conversation with the Redwood Trails Alliance in developing trail usage protocols, and organizing a shared trail ride with the Marin Horse Council. We look forward to seeing you at our annual picnic this August. And let us hear from you, our membership, about ways to improve the horseman's experience in our county. I encourage everyone, member or non-member, to reach out to us through info@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org with suggestions. We also encourage you to ask your friends to join the SCHC. A strong membership will help us to bring to the fore all of the issues that affect our horse world.

One sure way to connect with our horse community is through volunteerism. The SCHC is always looking for volunteers to help at events, to write or photograph for our *Horse Journal*, join up with distributing the magazine, or to fundraise for our Youth Horsemanship Grant program. If you have time and are interested in working with local horse people, please contact us at info@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org. You'll make new friends and enjoy a sense of accomplishment.

This brings to mind the idea of "local." Horse enthusiasts of all stripes have myriad things to purchase regularly. Buying habits have changed in the last few years to the point where many of us preferentially order from remote vendors and sources. It may be easy and convenient, but continuous online shopping erodes our local business base. Though you often need something right away, the disappearance of local businesses makes it increasingly difficult to find products and services nearby.

Please consider the next time you need to purchase, find it locally. If we all make the effort, slow down, and resume our small-town habits just a bit, the cumulative result will be felt by our North Bay suppliers, many of whom are advertisers in these pages, and make for a better economy and way of life for all of us.

We look forward to seeing you this spring at the many activities we have planned to bring all of us horse enthusiasts together.

Happy Trails, Henry Beaumont

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FUN WITH YOUR HORSE PALS

Longtime members, new members, and future members are welcome to join us for the Sonoma County Horse Council (SCHC) **Annual Meeting & Meet-N-Greet** on April 13 at Jesse Saldana Training Center. Connect with fellow equestrians, learn about SCHC's latest initiatives, and discover ways to get involved in our local horse community at our afternoon of networking, updates, and equestrian camaraderie.



Our generous and talented host Jesse Saldana will present a special showcase of Arabian show horses in western pleasure and halter. Enjoy this unique opportunity to see his expertise in action and celebrate our shared passion for horses.

Mark your calendar, spread the word, and join us for this horse-loving event.

Sunday, April 13, 11:30-3:00 p.m.
Jesse Saldana Training Center
5425 Stony Point Road, Santa Rosa
Please RSVP

VINTAGE CUTTING

The Vintage Cutting Horse Association events, all held at the Petaluma Riding and Driving Club, 1820 Skillman, Petaluma, have scheduled shows on June 21, July 19, August 23, and September 20. Curriculum highlights with Sandy Bonelli cutting clinic on May 17 will include flag work, hard work, showmanship, and warmup preparation. vchacutting.com, info@vchacutting.com.

INTERNATIONAL DRESSAGE EXPERTS TEACH AT SANBAR DRESSAGE

- Mike Osinski, April 19-20
- Anne Gribbons, June 28-29
- Christine Traurig, October 11-12
- Mike Osinski, November 7-9

Each clinic welcomes eight rides per day and an unlimited number of auditors. Registration opens eight weeks before each clinic. Sanbar Dressage, 6529 Lakeville, Petaluma. All information and reservations are found on SanbarDressage.com



HORSE BRAIN SCIENCE CLINIC

Horse Brain Science Clinic with equine neuroscientist **Dr. Steve Peters** (horsebrainscience.info) will teach you how best to communicate, understand, and connect with your horse based on the most current knowledge about their nervous system. Every perception, thought, action, reaction, all learning motor movement happens in the brain. All skills you and your horse develop result from signal patterns of your neural circuitry. Learn to tap into your horse's curiosity and exploration while creating your partner's brain growth. It is guaranteed to grow new dendrite and neural connections in both you and your horse's brains.

June 20 from 6-8 p.m. & June 21 - 22 from 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
4298 Bodega Avenue, Petaluma
Contact Melissa Kalember melissa@kalemberequine.com



WINNER OF SCHC YOUTH GRANT

Marie-Charlotte Guion and her horse, Sweet Mimi, are recipients of the **Youth Horsemanship Grant** awarded by the Sonoma County Horse Council. The $500 grant will further her study of dressage. Marie-Charlotte of Petaluma and Sweet Mini are active Pony Club members, organized at Sonoma Coastal EquesTraining Center. Last year, they traveled to Kentucky for the Pony Club National Championships and proudly brought home blue ribbons.

ACCESS TO YOUR BARN

Fire, floods, or other disasters might find you away from your horses. What if you need to care for them, but the fire or sheriff officials protect and block the area? An agriculture access verification card may facilitate expedited and limited access by owners/operators or direct full-time employees of commercial agricultural and livestock operations into areas under evacuation orders to conduct critical activities.

Critical activities are: 1. Evacuating, transporting, sheltering, feeding, watering, administering veterinary or other care to livestock; 2. Irrigating crops; 3. Fueling emergency generators or providing auxiliary support to peace officers and emergency personnel.

For details on eligibility and the process to obtain an ag access verification card under the Sonoma County's authority, visit the website sonomacounty.ca.gov/awm/agaccess and the Sonoma County Farm Bureau sonomafb.org/programs.

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBER - AMY DARLING

by Sarah de Sanz

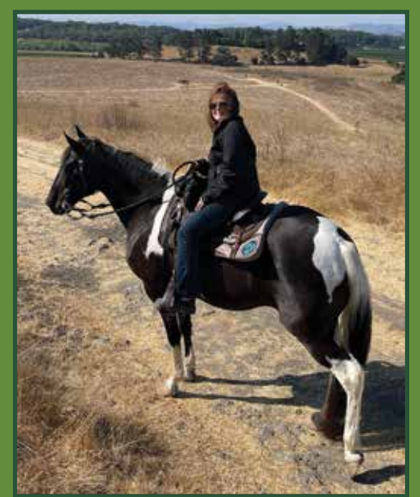
The Sonoma County Horse Council (SCHC) is thrilled to welcome Amy Darling to the board of directors.

Amy spent her early years in California's Central Valley, where participation in junior rodeo events instilled a passion for horses and the deep bond that can be created between horses and humans. After completing college at the University of California, Davis, Amy settled in Santa Rosa, where she raised her family and pursued a lengthy career in community banking.

Recently, she has embarked upon a new career path in air quality testing with a local firm. Her extensive experience on community non-profit boards, including El Molino Little League, El Molino Boosters, and the Rincon Valley Little League, makes her an ideal SCHC board member.

Amy brings to the board the skills needed for fundraising, community outreach, and team building, as well as a commitment to promoting the horseman's way of life in Sonoma County

Amy is the proud owner of ten-year-old June Bug, a brave-hearted and splashy Tennessee Walker. Amy and June Bug are avid trail riding enthusiasts.



PARTNERSHIP OFFERS SAFE TRAIL ACCESS FOR EQUESTRIANS WITH DISABILITIES

Giant Steps Therapeutic Equestrian Center has partnered with **Audubon Canyon Ranch**, a North Bay nature nonprofit, to increase trail riding opportunities for its clients. Giant Steps provides equine-assisted therapeutic programs, helping people with disabilities through riding and groundwork.

The programs take place almost entirely in a riding ring, where safety and control can be monitored. However, according to Executive Director Libby Porzig, Giant Steps riders have consistently given feedback that they want access to nature on horseback.

"Nature is not equally accessible to everyone, and people with disabilities face many barriers to accessing outdoor recreation," said Libby. Finding inclusive and accessible open spaces for Giant Steps riders has been both a challenge and a source of inspiration that has motivated their community.

However, Audubon Canyon Ranch's Bouverie Preserve in Glen Ellen was at the top of Libby's list. Last October, a small group of Giant Steps riders, a ground support team, and the horses Pierre and Buster set out on their first trail ride. The sounds of birdsong and expansive views across Sonoma Valley welcomed the riders.



Charlie takes Pierre for a trail ride at Bouverie Preserve.
Photo courtesy of Giant Steps Therapeutic Equestrian Center

For riders and hosts, the experience was joyful. Bouverie Preserve Resource Ecologist Jennifer Potts shared her excitement about making the preserve accessible for more Giant Steps riders. Porzig said the Center is committed to offering trail rides to all its clients with four 2025 dates planned for the summer.



NEW OPENING IN PENNGROVE

Dore Hayes and her training business **Revival Equestrian** have relocated to Penngrove at Rancho Union, 2455 E. Railroad Avenue. After 35 years professional experience working with a variety of well-respected classical trainers, from dressage to three-day eventing, she offers several modalities, striving for the gentlest possible methods and improved communication. The facility offers premium footing, huge turnouts, and deeply bedded stalls cleaned twice daily. Contact Revival Equestrian at justice4@sonic.net.

VETS POLO BENEFIT

The annual **Wounded Veterans' Polo Benefit** in Santa Rosa on August 17 features two polo games with leading Californian and international players presented by The Commandery of St. Francis, Order of St. John, at Wine Country Polo Club, 560 White Oak Drive. Activities include a gourmet lunch, wine tasting, and a silent auction to benefit rehabilitation programs for injured veterans of the Bay Area. The day opens with a bagpipes-led Presentation of the Colors and an intermission featuring a traditional divot stomp and hat contest. Tickets, sponsorships, and auction previews are found at www.PoloBenefit.org.



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BY PATTI SCHOFLER

[RARE ENCOUNTER]

HORSES LIVING WITH LIONS

Following a call at the office, Kim rushed home to find Lakota bleeding. Still in her business suit, she brought him out of the pasture, dressed the deep vertical cut across the Appaloosa's flank, and cared for the scraps that stripped the flesh on his sides.

Kim Murphy and DeWayne White had often seen mountain lions near and on their 20-acre Forestville property. Tracks demonstrated that mountain lions traveled through the West Mark Creek basin, seeking water and a safer habitat. That day last September, tracks around the paddocks clearly showed one big lion and one small lion had traveled via the earthen funnel that started on the upper trail and led down to the new French drains outside the barn and into Lakota's paddock.

DeWayne had repaired trails to improve water flow after damage from atmospheric river flooding. This minor change may have routed wildlife populations directly into Lakota's paddock. Kim and DeWayne had never seen lions in that specific area. They usually come through the deeper canyons and pass on a ridge by some storage barns.

That day Lakota hadn't worried. He was used to lion visits.

However, this lion that visited Lakota did not know what he was doing.

"It was either a very brave adult lion or, more likely, a younger, inexperienced cat who was kicked out of its natal range. It saw the horse and went after it, a risky thing that adult mountain lions in Sonoma do not typically do," said Dr. Quinton Martins, co-owner of True Wild and principal investigator for the North Bay Living with Lions project.

Living with Lions is a grassroots mountain lion conservation and research project working with communities to coexist with wildlife in partnership with Audubon Canyon Ranch and Sonoma County Wildlife Rescue. Their work includes understanding the behavior and movements of local mountain lions, exploring factors that influence their survival, and teaching children and adults how to co-exist with wildlife.

As Kim learned from Dr. Martins, attacking a grown horse in Sonoma is rare.

"Cats are visually stimulated predators and can be quite reactive. Think of throwing a ball of yarn for a kitten to chase," said Dr. Martins. "Judging by the paw marks, it looks like the lion jumped on Lakota but had to let go when the horse ran into the stall. We see this sort of thing on safari in Africa when, for example, a young male leopard attempts to hunt an African buffalo, a very formidable animal. Everything is fine until the buffalo turns around and chases the cat up a tree making it look rather sheepish," Dr. Martins described.

Mountain lions do not have the temperament of an apex predator like an African lion or leopard. "Picture California 12,000 years ago. In North America, mountain lions coexisted with big carnivores, like the saber-tooth and the American lions, the latter weighing up to 850 pounds versus today's 150-pound male mountain lion. I imagine mountain lions of those days being very fearful of being eaten by big predators. They must have carried this evolutionary sub-ordinate behavior as they are nowhere near as aggressive as an apex predator like a leopard or African lion," said Quinton. "Perhaps this is why mountain lions, most of the time, steer clear of people, the super-predators of today. They are incredibly capable predators but much more timid than other big cats."

HABITAT NOT WITH HORSES

A recent population density study revealed that 50 to 75 mountain lions reside in Sonoma County. The Living with Lions project has collected over 170,000 GPS locations from 34 lions that they have tracked using satellite GPS collars over eight years.

Lions have significant ranges, 40 square miles for females and 100 to 200 square miles for males. One collared territorial male, P31, had a range that extended from Bodega to Healdsburg, crossing the Russian River. His range incorporated over 11,000 land parcels.

"Despite sharing the land with so many people within his range, mountain lions try to stay undetected by mainly moving at night and where there is good vegetation cover. If you are by a creek, you have a good chance they've been there.

"A Google Maps satellite image of Sonoma shows dark and light areas. The dark areas represent areas with shrubs, trees, or forest, ideal cover for mountain lions. The light green usually represents open land or grassland that mountain lions mostly avoid. If you live in a dark green area connected to or close to darker green, you are living with lions," said Quinton.

Creeks with surrounding vegetation act as wildlife highways and allow mountain lions to move from one area to another, even if the surrounding areas are open.

Based on GPS movement data, Kim's property at Mark West Creek, north of River Road, forms the edge of the core lion habitat.

"It is likely better for young adolescent lions to sneak around and avoid the adults who may injure or kill them when encountered. Mountain lions are solitary cats and don't want to share their territory with anyone else. A male will try to have three to four territorial females in his range but won't tolerate other males. Females are also solitary but are often seen with their offspring, which, when near dispersal age, can be the same size or even bigger than mom."

For mountain lions, horses are intimidating, big, and strong, even 14.3 hand Lakota.

"Adult horses, especially if there are more than one together, are typically not at risk in our area," said Quinton. "As the lions get older, they realize 'I'm a solitary cat; I should be careful because if I get injured, I won't be able to care for my young or take care of myself or my territory.' They learn as they age to minimize their risk and maximize the rewards. So grown horses in our area are a high-risk prey to them and typically avoided. Deer and deer-sized animals are what they key into."



Lakota and Earl the Mule



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FOALS, YEARLINGS, MINIS

Foals and yearlings would be more at risk if adult horses are not nearby to protect them, and miniature horses fall into a potential prey category. "Although there is no recorded killing by mountain lions in eight years, we have documented a few cases of attacks."

To protect small animals, consider that mountain lions, like all cats, are visually stimulated predators. They are not as driven by smell, like a bear. Sight and hearing are their go-to. A visual barrier can protect small horses near the optimal habitats where the lions travel.

"Since a mountain lion can jump fifteen feet high, small animals should be housed in a fully predator-proof enclosure at night," described Quinton. "Failing that, consider an enclosure with an eight-foot fence covered with a non-see-through material (shade cloth, canvas, or wood) so the lion can't see in. This method has been effective against leopards and African lions and should work here. Covering any enclosure like this is also important so animals inside aren't freaked out by some huge cat with big teeth and claws outside looking in."

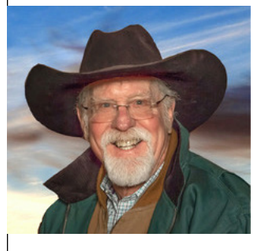
> "Perhaps this is why mountain lions, most of the time, steer clear of people, the super-predators of today. They are incredibly capable predators but much more timid than other big cats."

Trail cameras by the barn and Mark West Spring have been installed to see how the lions enter the property. "Quinton lost track of the collared male lion P31 that was tagged and tracked in our area. He suspects he is dead," Kim related. "The lion who attacked my horse might be the cat who took over the Russian River area P31 once patrolled. With the cameras up, the researchers can determine the extent of lion activity, movements, and hunting behavior."

Lakota has healed well from two weeks of antibiotics. However, he was getting nervous at night, and Kim administered Xylazine tranquilizer to help his anxiety.

Before he was attacked, Lakota had been alone with his paddock and stall. Now, he is again fine at home and on the trail, but Kim has an ace in the hole if he becomes nervous: their 18-hand, 1600-pound mammoth mule Earl. "I've never heard about a lion going after a mule."

Because they have found a method that works for all sides, Lakota, Earl, Kim, Dewayne, and the mountain lions have chosen to co-exist on the ranch, Sonoma County, and the world. https://egret.org/living-with-lions/



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Which Muscles Step Up For Your Ride

BY ABBY HANC

Demands of individual equine sports require a unique combination of muscular engagement, and in turn each discipline affects the rider's body in a different way. Though all equestrian disciplines require balance, control, coordination of multiple muscle groups, and core strength, understanding the distinct patterns of muscle development and postural adaptation of your discipline will contribute to the success of your riding.

As a certified Pilates instructor and myofascial release practitioner specializing in equestrians, I can better help athletes by evaluating the equestrian biomechanics of their unique sport.

DRESSAGE

Dressage riders hold an aligned upright position in a neutral spine from ear to heel with even weight distributed across the seat bones and even pressure down to the balls of the feet. The core muscles (transverse abdominis, rectus abdominis, and obliques) are continuously activated to maintain stability and to provide subtle communication to the horse.

The rider's muscles along the spine, erector spinae, are engaged to support the spine. The hip flexors, glutes, and abductors (outside of the leg) work to execute specific aids, and the adductors have light engagement along the inside line of the rider's legs. The muscles of the upper body, in particular the latissimus dorsi and the rhomboids, help to maintain shoulder stability while allowing freedom to move the arms.

Did you know the secondary function of the lats is to drop the shoulders? If you think about squeezing your armpit like you are trying to hold your phone under your arm while you ride, it will help keep your shoulders down, keep your elbows from creeping away, and give you a much more solid place to work.

JUMPING

In jumping, riders are uniquely challenged by alternating between seated and jumping positions, changing dynamic stability. Major muscle groups in jumping include the quadriceps, hamstrings, calf muscles



Joie Kozubal and Icelandic Horse Tigull compete in the show jumping phase of eventing at Ram Tap in Fresno.
Photo courtesy of Carrie Kozubel

(gastrocnemius and soleus), and upper back muscles. Unlike dressage, the quadriceps are a major player in jumping, as the rider must remain in the half seat or jumping position without accidentally hitting the bum on the saddle.

In dressage, larger quadriceps muscles can be a disadvantage when overly activated. They make it difficult to let the leg hang and create tightness across the lower back, causing disharmony for the dressage horse that is trained to listen to those subtle shifts from the rider.

Because jumpers engage in upper leg strength, riders transitioning from jumping to dressage often struggle with gripping the leg.

On the flip side, many dressage riders who switch to jumping struggle with independent shoulder stability and contact.

Core muscles are engaged dynamically throughout the trajectory changes required in jumping. The muscles in the upper back are needed for support both in preparation for the jump and in landing. The lower back muscles are engaged, a more forward inclination is required in jumping.

WESTERN

In the western world, we will examine the different muscle uses in reining. If you think you have a good seat, find out by sitting on a well-trained reining horse. Those horses can move.

Similar to dressage and jumping, reining requires strong core muscles. However, these core muscles are important for maintaining stability of the spine through quick stops and spins. The pelvic floor and glute muscles are key for maintaining contact in the saddle through sliding stops. Interestingly with reining, the quadriceps and hamstrings must work asymmetrically during spins and rollbacks. Similar to dressage, the lower legs need to provide precise cuing for changes and transitions. The spine needs to be fully supported for shock absorption during stopping maneuvers.

POLO

One of the most loved disciplines to watch is polo. This game brings in a variety of athletic versatility that are found in other disciplines. For one, polo players have a unique set of muscular demands that include a lot of asymmetric movement and quick switches. Their oblique muscles must engage during the hitting positions and through the rotations.

The shoulder and arm muscles work harder in this discipline than any other through the swinging mechanics, especially on the mallet side. The core muscles fire dynamically to maintain balance throughout the rapid direction changes, and adductors stay activated to maintain a secure position through all the quick changes of direction.

ENDURANCE

Endurance requires exceptional stamina and efficient muscle engagement to maintain effectiveness over long distances. The deep core muscles (transverse abdominis and multifidus) and the erector spinae group along the spine are engaged for hours at a time to maintain their upright position.

Interestingly the thigh muscles have to alternate between active engagement during posting trot and a more relaxed position during walking to avoid muscle fatigue along with stabilization during the strenuous trail sections that require technical skill. The upper body muscles such as the trapezius and the rhomboids have to remain engaged without creating unnecessary tension. Muscles must respond quickly when terrain suddenly changes.

Clearly, all riding disciplines require effective, efficient, and precise muscle use and control. The key to maintaining this balance lies in the coordinated engagement of core muscle groups, particularly the deep abdominal muscles and back stabilizers. These muscles must work continuously yet responsively, allowing for both stability and the subtle movements required for effective riding.

A balanced rider will make for a happy horse.



Engaging oblique muscles in polo.
Photo by William Stacy







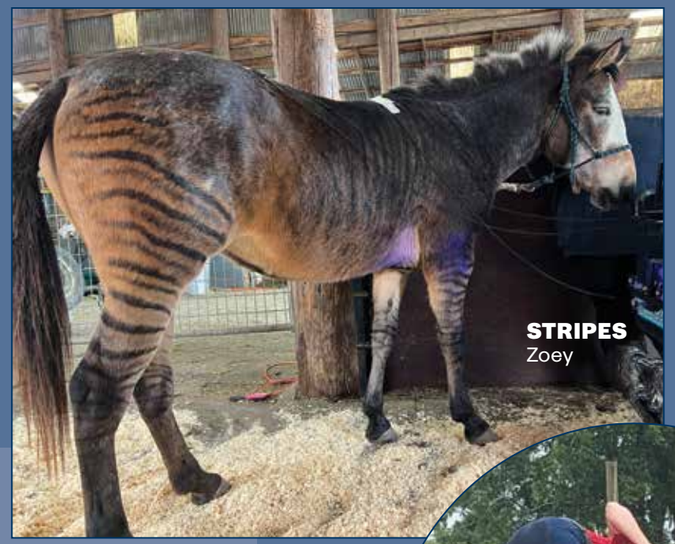


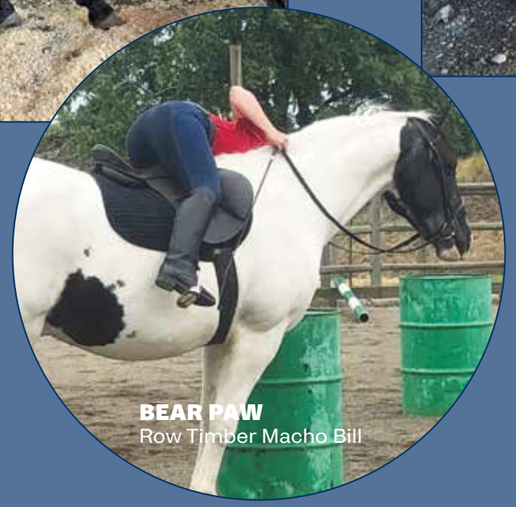
THE HORSE





CANVAS







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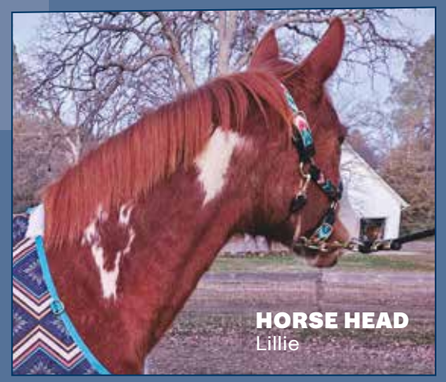

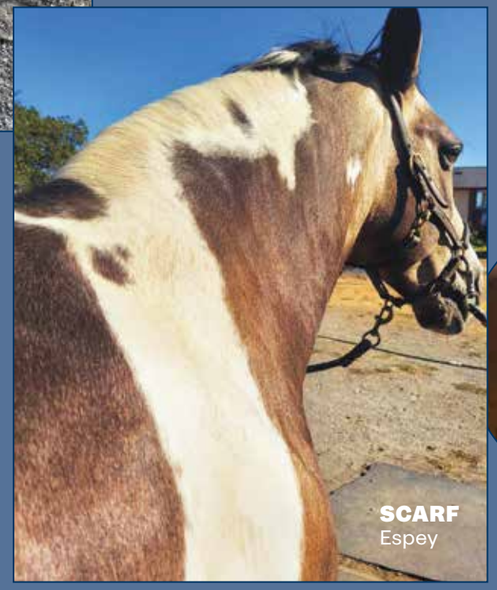



Horses and their Riders Dare Outside the Box

BY DANELLE JACOBS

Let's admit it. When it comes to horse breeds and disciplines, we all have stereotypes. Quarter Horses do western disciplines, Thoroughbreds race and retire to English and jumping disciplines, Warmbloods do dressage, draft horses pull things, and so on.

Every once in a while, though, maybe by accident or maybe on purpose, a person ignores what the horse is supposed to do and says, "Let's just give this a try." Happily, sometimes, the experiment works like these following human-equine partnerships that are breaking out of their molds.



Milo

MILO, THE KENTUCKY MOUNTAIN SADDLE HORSE

Gaited horses are known for their smooth ride, making them ideal trail horses. Gymkhana is a discipline of thirteen timed events requiring speed, tight turns, and little jumps. Horses typically complete the patterns at a lope and a canter. Milo, a Kentucky Mountain Saddle Horse, is proving that you don't have to canter to be successful; his saddle gait, which is as fast as a gentle lope, will do just fine.

Heather Giusti of Petaluma, Milo's owner, was tagging along with her daughter who rides a Quarter Horse at gymkhanas and thought, "I might as well be riding too." Thus, started Milo's gymkhana career. Heather admitted that the tight turns are hard for Milo; they work diligently on improving his turning skills. He will canter but prefers the saddle gait, which is a lateral, four-beat gait.

Milo and Heather have been to the California Gymkhana Association's Northern Classic and the State Gymkhana Championship. At the Northern Classic, Milo was the only gaited horse. At the State Championship, he was one of two or three. At 22-years-old, Milo's times are still improving. Heather said they definitely get looks when they are in the arena. Still, the gymkhana community is so family-oriented and friendly that the horse with the different way of going is always welcomed.



Esperanzero

ESPERANZERO, THE SPOTTED SADDLE HORSE

Other sports bring gaited horses onto the stage to show off their ability. Esperanzero is a Spotted Saddle Horse, which in 2018 Tressa Boulden-Linsley of Sebastopol pulled from a Louisiana kill pen. "Espie" caught her eye because, as a child, Tressa had always wanted a tri-color pinto. Tressa noted that, as a gaited horse, Espie is "definitely not the typical horse you're going to see in the dressage court." However, as Tressa believes all horses, regardless of breed, can benefit from dressage, she and Espie went to work.

While she has not competed with Espie, he can now manage all lateral work and has "a little idea" about passage and piaffe work. However, like his gaited counterpart Milo, Tressa noted that the canter is a challenging gait for Espie. Regardless, Espie, in his opalescent tri-color coat, is proving that gaited horses have much to offer beyond trail-riding.

BELLA, THE SHIRE CROSS

When seeing a draft horse, size and power come to most people's minds: speed and agility? Not so much. Sixteen-year-old, 17.3 hands Bella, however, loves to run barrels. How did Samantha Marcovitch of Santa Rosa wind up with a barrel race-loving draft horse? She explained that she "just loves big horses." Previously, Samantha rode hunter-jumpers on an 18.3-hand Selle Francais. The original plan for Bella was a jumping career. Their path changed direction when Samantha's trainer, Annette Garcia, took them to their first gymkhana, and they had a good time. They next went to a barrel race, where Bella made it very clear what her preferred discipline was. The two never looked back.



Bella

Samantha explained that the minute Bella had any inkling that it was time to run a pattern, "something clicked, and she became a different horse." Her average barrel time last year was 26 seconds. Trainer Annette thinks Bella could go much faster but Samantha admits, laughingly, "I get in her way."

Bella has been winning her Future Champion (FC) level, so they are moving up to the A division.

The mare definitely stands out at events. "Everyone wants to pet her, but she's not the nicest mare." Nice or not, Bella is showing that size and strength can come with speed and agility.

SHAMUS AND LINCOLN, THE CLYDESDALES

Everyone knows the magnificent Budweiser Clydesdales. But giant Clydesdales giving lessons to four-year-olds? That is exactly what Shamus and Lincoln specialize in.

Charlisse Weintraub did not set out to teach lessons on Clydesdales. She was looking for a horse for her husband, who had declared, "Fine. If you're going to get me a horse to ride it has to be one of those Budweiser horses." So, she found Shamus in Illinois. Lincoln came later from the same farm.

Charlisse admitted that, at first, parents are a little wide-eyed. She has heard "that horse's head is as big as my kid!". But the kids don't blink an eye and the parents are quickly won over by the horses' kindness. The fact that "they drool like St. Bernards" helps too.

Shamus is 13 years old and gives beginner lessons. Lincoln is a little feistier and does better with intermediate riders. Charlisse described him as "the step-up Clydesdale." His big, rolling, stride makes learning to sit the canter easy. Both horses can give their charges their first schooling show experiences where "There's a Clydesdale in the ground poles class!?" is often heard. Lincoln also goes to dressage shows with his more advanced riders.

Does her husband ride Shamus? "No. He's ridden him maybe three times," Charlisse laughed. So while Shamus may not have turned out to be a husband horse, the two gentle giants are favorites in her lesson program. Charlisse, however, admits that she needs a taller mounting block.

RAUDI-GANDI FROM DALALIF, THE ICELANDIC HORSE

Pia Tucker did not plan on showing up at a three-day event with an Icelandic Horse registered as Raudi-Gandi from Dalalif. However, she had already paid the entry fees for a competition at Woodland Stallion Station when her regular eventing mount got hurt. So, she took Raudi-Gandi, meaning red horse, tongue in cheek. "I had my apology speech to the judges written in my head."

Given that Icelandic Horses are a gaited breed, Pia admitted that "the transitions in dressage are challenging." Red, standing all of 13.3 hands, apparently did not know he was out of place at the three-day event and won his Intro level class. "We did our victory lap in tolt!" Deciding to build on Red's success, they next went to an event in Fresno where Red took second place.



Raudi-Gandi

People are surprised to see the little Icelandic out competing. Most frequently, Pia hears, "He's so cute!". But she said the beauty of eventing is that "it's such an open community. If you can get around, you can get around," regardless how tall you stand or what gait you do it in.

BEAR AND STAN, THE OFF THE TRACK THOROUGHBREDS

When Off the Track Thoroughbred (OTTB) is said, words that frequently jump to the mind are "crazy," "spooky," and "hot," exactly the opposite of the type of horse you would want for an adaptive riding program. However, when Joell Dunlap founded the Square Peg Foundation, an adaptive riding program for neurodivergent clients, she knew from working the backside of racetracks that OTTBs were the perfect fit.

Becca Knopf from Square Peg in Sonoma noted that many Thoroughbreds have extensive human contact from birth. Therefore, they tend to "see humans as just part of the herd". Though there are many OTTBs on the horse team at Square Peg, Bear and Stan stand out.

"Bear" (Jockey Club name Green With Eddie) had a successful racing career in Southern California. A survivor of the tragic fire at the San Luis Rey Training Center near San Diego, California, in 2017, Becca described Bear as "a deeply emotional horse." He has been with Square Peg since 2020, where he has excelled at liberty work, trail riding, and being ridden bridle-less by clients.

"Stan" (Jockey Club name Irresponsible King) was a "terrible racehorse" according to Becca and his Jockey Club record. When he arrived at Square Peg, he was aggressive and would flip himself over. With patience, Stan has defied his breed's stereotypes and his own history. At 23 years old, he became a pillar of the program as a specialist in hand work. He happily and willingly cantered and trotted in hand with clients aboard.

Sadly, in February Stan passed from a strangulating lipoma. He is so missed at Square Peg.

OTTBs have a level of professionalism that is hard to match. Further, "You won't find a horse that tries harder," said Becca. She went on to say, "You have to be creative with OTTBs, just like you have to be creative with our clients." The heart of a Thoroughbred is often mentioned; Stan and Bear are shining examples of OTTBs giving their huge hearts to quietly and intuitively help people.

These horses teach us that it's okay to try something new; it's okay to take a chance. They demonstrate the importance of listening to your horse - Bella the draft horse says she wants to run barrels. They remind us that it's the heart of the horse, not necessarily the outside of the horse, that's important. Red has no idea that he's perhaps a bit short for an eventer. They prove that with patience, knowledge, and some creativity, they can overcome their pasts and stereotypes, as Bear and Stan have done. They dare us to think outside the box and to toss away what "should" be.

> If you want to do your victory lap in a tolt or run a pattern in the saddle gait ... just go for it.



Stan





TIME TO ORGANIZE FOR EQUINE EVACUATION

BY CARY E. GLOECKNER

The Southern California fires remind horse owners and barn managers that now is the time to prepare an evacuation plan in case of wildfire. As a horse owner and retired fire captain, I've laid out six steps to prepare for an equine evacuation, considering that wildfires move fast, but preparing horses for trailering can be slow.



During fire season, leave your hauling system connected and facing out. Photo courtesy of Cary Groeckner

STEP 1

Download and familiarize yourself with two apps that are both free to use. Without these services, only two ways will let you know a wildfire is coming: a nearby column of smoke or fire burning on your property

• **Watch Duty** is a free app that provides real-time wildfire alerts and information from a team of firefighters, dispatchers, and reporters, allowing you to follow wildfire developments.

• **Sonoma County Alert** (SoCoAlert) sends out messages regarding the safety or welfare of the residents of Sonoma County. It will send evacuation warnings and orders directly to your phone, enabling you to quickly execute your evacuation plan. Follow the instructions on the site to register multiple addresses such as your home and barn, if different. Socoemergency.org

STEP 2

Know your evacuation zone by searching "Know Your Zone". Click on the search result for socoemergency.org and follow the instructions.

STEP 3

Horse owners and barn managers must be prepared for evacuation and practice the time it takes to load and go. During fire season, leave your hauling system connected and facing out whenever possible to shorten evacuation response time, given that there can be a lag between the issuance of an evacuation order and its receipt.

Start the evacuation process when receiving an evacuation warning. Waiting for an evacuation order may not give you enough time to evacuate and may get you stuck in congested traffic.

Plan on purchasing hay near the evacuation destination because hay in the truck bed or on top of the trailer may ignite from embers.

STEP 4

Determine if you have enough trucks, trailers and, especially, drivers to evacuate all horses simultaneously. If not, develop a plan you can activate at a moment's notice to safely evacuate your horses to a predetermined evacuation site. Tow vehicles should have up-to-date fluid changes, properly inflated tires with good tread, working headlights, working windshield wipers, and windows that can be rolled up tightly.

Replace trailer tires every four years as they become brittle from sun damage and subject to blowout. Trailers should have an annual safety inspection and wheel bearings serviced. Ensure all windows, vents, and doors close completely so embers cannot ignite internal contents.

STEP 5

Establish multiple access and evacuation routes. Your normal travel route may be impacted by smoke and fire early on. If you have one way in and out of your barn on a primary road, you may not be able to access or evacuate. Ensure that all structures on the property have good defensible space and structural hardening.

If you cannot evacuate because the fire has impacted the evacuation route, the safest option is to stay on site. Going out on foot with your horses or turning them loose can cause deadly impacts with first responders and civilians. Horses in an open field with short grass (three inches or less) have better odds of surviving than running wild through the fire area.

STEP 6

Establish pre-designated evacuation destinations five to ten miles away from the fire area. Ensure that your designated evacuation area will not be impacted by fire once you arrive by checking on developing evacuation warnings or orders for that area.

The Sonoma County Animal Response Team website has an excellent Emergency Animal Evacuation Packet that lists three emergency animal shelter sites. Save these locations in your favorite driving directions app so they are readily available under stressful situations. Further, the Watch Duty app will update official animal evacuation sites.

In 2019, my horses, along with others from Sauvignon Eventing, evacuated to Woodside Horse Park. When we arrived, the horses were able to settle down free of smoke and out of harm's way, leaving us able to care for our property back in the evacuation zone. During wildfires, be prepared to lose phone service. Knowing driving routes ahead of time will be useful.

Create a small binder with the following information that will live in your tow vehicle.

1. Paper maps of evacuation routes including destination contact information.
2. Filled out Emergency Animal Evacuation Packet forms from Sonoma C.A.R.T. at: www.sonomacart.org/forms.
3. Print out emergency haulers' contact information. Save their contact information to your phone. Sonoma C.A.R.T., Halter Project and NorCal Livestock Evacuation may be able to haul your horses in case you are out of town. Contact them in advance for service when you will be out of town.

The time to prepare for an equine evacuation is right now.

Reading the smoke column could give you valuable information on where to travel in an evacuation.



The start of the Walbridge Fire. The column of smoke is going straight up in the air indicating the fire is moving slowly in all directions.



Notice the smoke column is pointing where the fire wants to go. When the smoke is pointing in the direction of your egress route, you should use an alternate evacuation route away from the wildfire.



Smoke appears to be moving toward the camera. Look at the base of the fire and then straight up. If you see smoke overhead or blowing in your face, then the fire is coming your way. Have multiple ways to evacuate with your horses. Often your main mode of travel will be blocked by fire or smoke. If you cannot see the other side of a roadway impeded by smoke or fire, do not drive through it. Turn around and use your alternate evacuation route, moving away from the wildfire coming toward you.

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What do you call a horse that loves to travel? A globe-trotter!

Why did the horse run away from the party? Because he couldn't handle the neigh-sayers!



What's a horse's favorite clothing brand? Old Neigh-vy!

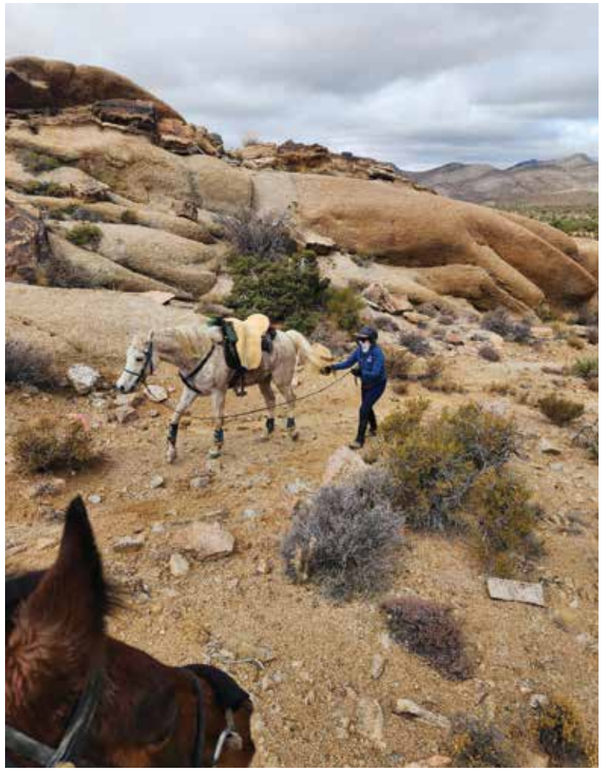
What sort of horses come out after dark? Nightmares!

What disease are horses most scared of getting? Hay fever!

A horse walks into a bar. The barman asks: "Why the long face?"

What do you call a horse that can't lose a race? Sherbet!

What's a horse's favorite sport? Stable Tennis!



Twenty-one-year-old DC Valor has been part of the Cindy and Jim Brown family of Healdsburg since he was a yearling. Here, he tails on a 30-mile endurance ride in the Eastern Mojave Desert.



TAILING YOUR HORSE

BY CINDY BROWN

TAILING IS NOT A COMMON TERM OUTSIDE THE ENDURANCE WORLD, BUT RIDERS IN MANY SPORTS SHOULD FIND TAILING A PLACE IN THEIR HORSEMANSHIP LEXICON.

Debbie fell off her horse out in the hills behind the barn. Her ankle hurt. She leaned against her mare's hindquarter, held herself balanced by pulling on the horse's tail, and they successfully made it home.

Don had an injury and couldn't ride but still wanted to hand walk his horse on the trails. He found tailing let him keep going with his horse and his condition.

In an endurance ride, going up hills requires more energy output than on the flat. One way to not overfatigue the horse is to get off and tail him up those hills. With tailing, both a horse and a rider benefit their physical condition in a winning manner.

Essentially, tailing is pulling the tail and walking behind the horse. Before trying this on trails, work with your horse at home by grabbing and pulling on the tail as often as possible so that the horse can get used to the idea. As an added benefit, using about seven to ten pounds of pressure can help stretch the horse's back and help align the spine. While most horses enjoy this pressure, some will need more practice to get used to the feeling of tail pulling.

Long reins or a separate lightweight rope with a clip will lead the horse, from behind. It should be the same length as your horse with the tail extended, about 10 feet long. Too long, and you may get the horse's legs tangled. Too much slack and too short length add too much contact pressure, not allowing the horse the forward motion needed to pull you behind him.

Clip your reins or rope onto the chin ring of the headstall, having the rope run lengthwise along the left side of the horse's body. You don't want to tail without also holding your rope or reins. Otherwise, your horse can pull away easily and travel down the trail without you.

To introduce this new way of working with a human, it's easiest to either follow another horse and rider, have someone pony the horse, or have someone ride the horse while you practice tailing behind until they understand what you are asking.



International endurance athlete Connie Creech uses trailing on rides as shown in this 1975 photo. She represented the US team in 1990 at the FEI World Equestrian Games in Stockholm, and today, she has over 31,000 miles of competition.

When behind your horse, loop the horse's tail around your right hand, keeping your arm mostly straight, and try using your upper biceps more than your lower arm so you don't tire out so quickly. Your left hand is holding the cord that is connected to your clip under your horse's chin.

Eventually, the horse has to realize he should continue moving forward up the trail while you're behind, holding on to his tail with or without the assistance of a buddy horse. When you are in the back asking him to go on, he likely will think you want him to turn sideways, as if to longe. With lots of patience and practice, your horse will understand.

If needed, at any time, you can pull your horse around to face you with your left hand to stop the forward momentum.

Make sure you can clearly see the trail ahead so you and your horse have less chance of tripping or stumbling.

The more you practice, the better your horse will learn what you want. Remember, tailing is a fun learning opportunity for you and your horse.

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LAMINITIS

BY MICHELLE BEKO DVM

Laminitis is a very painful condition that plagues horses. The laminae are the soft tissue that bind the coffin bone (third phalanx) to the hoof wall. When they become inflamed, the horse has laminitis, and that connection is weakened, which can lead to rotation or sinking of the coffin bone within the hoof capsule.

The symptoms of laminitis may vary slightly depending on the horse and the cause, but it is invariably painful. The front feet are most commonly affected, but it is not uncommon to have all four feet involved, or rarely, it can start in the hind feet. Some horses will move as if "walking on eggshells", some will extend their forelegs forward and lean back in order to carry more weight on their hindlimbs, and many will be reluctant to move. Many will resist picking up their feet and they may lie down more than usual. They may have warm hooves with a bounding digital pulse.

There are many causes of laminitis. By far the most common cause worldwide is what we used to call grass laminitis. We have long known that overweight horses grazing lush spring grass were predisposed to getting it. After a few very large research projects, we finally have more insight. Researchers found that horses who have high levels of insulin get laminitis. Simply injecting insulin into a healthy horse will cause them to have it. This means horses with metabolic syndrome are predisposed. We now refer to this type of laminitis as endocrinopathic laminitis. (Summer 2019 *Horse Journal*)

Other causes of laminitis include infectious diseases such as colitis (diarrhea), pleural pneumonia and a retained placenta. Additionally, grain overload can be a factor. This happens most commonly when a horse breaks into the feed room and eats a large quantity of grain, usually over 20 pounds.

There is also supporting limb laminitis which occurs most commonly with fractures in the opposite leg, leading the horse to overload the good leg. It's one of the issues that make repairing equine fractured legs challenging. Barbaro won the Kentucky Derby in 2006 and, sadly, broke a hind cannon bone in the Preakness. Although it was surgically repaired and apparently healing well, he got laminitis in the other hind foot and



This radiograph is from a horse that does not indicate laminitis. Notice the relationship of the coffin bone within the hoof to the hoof wall.



Notice that the coffin bone is not parallel to the hoof wall in this radiograph of a foundered horse.

was euthanized several weeks after surgery. Additionally, there is the rare, so-called road founder, when an unfit horse gets ridden a long distance, especially on hard ground.

Lastly, about a third of horses with Cushing's disease (pituitary pars intermedia dysfunction or PPID) will get laminitis, usually in the early stages of the disease, often before anyone knows they have PPID.

Regardless of the inciting cause, the most important treatment is to resolve the underlying condition. In the case of endocrinopathic laminitis, that means taking the horse off of grass and usually getting them on a weight loss program. They should have a maximum of 10 percent soluble carbohydrates (i.e., sugars) in their diet. If you aren't feeding low-carb hay, you can soak what you have in water for 30 to 60 minutes before feeding. This leaches most of the sugars out. In extreme cases, I will put a horse on thyroid hormone to speed up their weight loss.

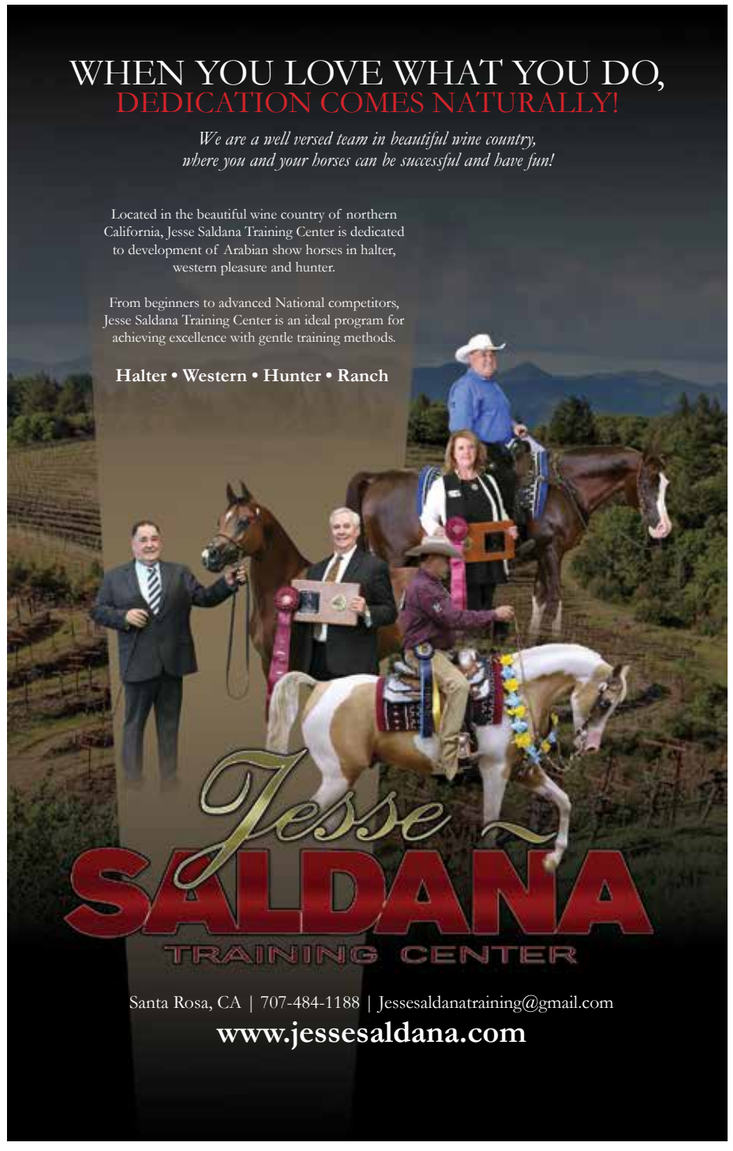
Pain relief is a very important part of treatment. Phenylbutazone (aka 'bute") is generally accepted to be the most effective for laminitic pain. Other pain medications can be given along with bute if necessary. Deeply bedding a stall to encourage the horse to lie down is helpful as well.

Most horses are much more comfortable, as well as potentially less likely to rotate, if they have their heels elevated. The deep digital flexor tendon travels down the back of the leg and inserts on the bottom of the coffin bone. It exerts a certain amount of tension, which is not a problem when the laminae are normal. When they are weakened, that tension can cause the coffin bone to rotate. Elevating a horse's heels lessens the pull

of this tendon. There are temporary pads veterinarians can apply to raise the horse's heels until the owner can purchase Soft Ride Boots or EasyCare Cloud Boots.

Once a horse's active laminitis has subsided, if its coffin bone has rotated, called founder, they need chronic management. The horse needs regular trimming by a skilled farrier to realign the hoof to the coffin bone. When the coffin bone is rotated, it can pinch the sensitive tissue of the sole between itself and the ground. Repeated radiographs (x-rays) can help guide that process.

Of course, the best care is for laminitis not to happen at all. Notice if your horse is quickly gaining weight on a grassy pasture, especially if it gets a cresty neck, a buildup of fat along the top of the neck. Keep two doors between the grain and horses, and have your veterinarian treat any illnesses when they arise. Prevention is the best plan.





SONOMA COUNTY HORSE COUNCIL
PO BOX 7157, SANTA ROSA, CA 95407

PREMIER HOMES & COUNTRY ESTATES





FAR FIELD FARM, PETALUMA

Nestled on over 234 acres of picturesque, rolling hills, this historic Southern colonial ranch, originally built in the 1860s, offers a unique blend of vintage charm and modern convenience. The stately 3,600 sq. ft. home features five spacious bedrooms, five baths, and an office, all brimming with period details that capture the essence of a bygone era. From its vantage point, the home overlooks a serene pond framed by mature trees, creating a tranquil setting rich with local wildlife and diverse bird species that gather around the property's two ponds. The property is designed for the equestrian enthusiast, with a thoughtfully separated equestrian facility that includes a covered arena measuring approximately 200x60 feet. Attached to this arena is a barn with eight stalls, a tack room, and cozy living quarters ideal for a caretaker or guests. On the opposite side of the arena, you'll find spacious foaling stalls and an additional office space, perfect for managing equine needs. Beyond the indoor facilities, the property also includes an outdoor arena, a hay barn, and multiple paddocks and pastures, providing a delightful setup for training, leisurely riding, or simply enjoying equine companions. This historical ranch offers a rare combination of classic charm and well-appointed equestrian amenities, ideal for those looking to embrace country living at its finest. $6.000,000

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